

SUNSHINE PERIOD

Diocese of Dallas

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

May 28, 2003

Ms. Marlene Dortch
Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St., S.W.
Room TW 204B
Washington, D.C. 20554

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Re: Informal Comments, MB Dkt. No. 02 277;
MM Dkt. No. 01 235; MM Dkt. No. 01 317; MM Dkt. No. 00 244

Dear Ms. Secretary:

The Catholic Diocese of Dallas submits the following informal comments in the above referenced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, released September 23, 2002.

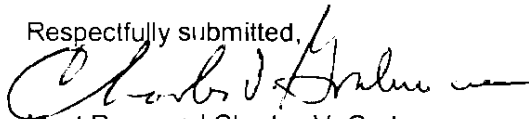
The Diocese has long been concerned about the erosion of local news and public affairs programming caused by the FCC's and Congress weakening of broadcast ownership limits. This includes the FCC's elimination of broadcast rules which formerly had permitted the FCC and the community to monitor broadcasters to help ensure that broadcasters served their community of license with programs which meet community needs and interests. In particular, in this diocese, locally produced and locally directed religious programming, although wanted by the community, has all but disappeared, replaced by syndicated talk shows and infomercials.

We have seen major media erosion in Dallas/Fort Worth for years. It began in the early 1980's. Since that time, the area has one less major newspaper; we now have just one in each city. This has resulted in less competition, fewer diverse voices heard in the media and less balanced reporting.

TV and radio stations have drastically cut their public service air time. It makes it almost impossible for non-profit and religious groups to use the electronic media inform the community about their programs important to us all.

The Diocese urges the FCC to refrain from making changes in the current rules which (a) prohibit cross ownership of broadcast stations and newspapers in the same community, (b) limit the number of television and radio stations a single entity may own in a single community, (c) set a national ownership cap for television stations at an already overly generous 35% of households, and (d) prohibit common ownership of major television networks. Cable television already is dominated by the same companies that dominate television and satellite systems and the programming on those systems, and those same companies are moving into providing Internet access. Neither cable nor the Internet (whether offered through cable or telephone companies) offer meaningful alternatives to the already scarce supply of truly local news and local public affairs programs on over the air television and radio.

Respectfully submitted,


Most Reverend Charles V. Grahmann
Bishop of Dallas

cc: Representative Pete Sessions
Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson
Senator John Cronyn

Ms. G. J. [unclear] 0
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